awareness and training in the area of pollution control through various programmes including use of electronic media which includes the following:—

(i) A number of documentaries and films have been sponsored by the Ministry of Environment and Forests for educating the general public for taking measures to protect the environment and control pollution. These documentaries/films are shown on Doordarshan and other channels.

(ii) The Ministry of Environment & Forests and Central Pollution Control Board have launched their own web sites for the dissemination of information on environmental related issues.

(iii) Video shows have been organized for the school children at various places in the country through Central Pollution Control Board.

Felling of trees

924. SHRI GAYA SINGH:
SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Himachal Pradesh Government has lifted the 16 year old ban on the felling of trees; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABULAL MARANDI): (a) and (b) Hon'ble Supreme Court vide para (iii) of its order dated 12th December, 1996 in Civil Writ Petition No. 202/ 95 has banned felling of trees in any forest, public or private, except in private plantations (non-forest) and the cutting of trees by right holders for their bona fide personal use. The news of lifting the ban on the felling of trees by the Government of Himachal Pradesh appeared in the Indian Express and the Hindu news papers on 23.1.2000. Ministry of Environment and Forests has advised the State

Government of Himachal Pradesh on 1.2.2000 not to take any action contrary to the directions passed by the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court has also taken cognizance of the above news and issued notice to the State of Himachal Pradesh in its order dated 14.2.2000. The Supreme Court has also given stay to the operation of any such order issued by the State Government on lifting of ban on felling of trees till further orders by the Court. This matter at present is subjudice.

Forest cover

925. SHRIMATI BASANTI SARMA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the total forest areas in the country at present, State-wise;

(b) whether it is a fact that the forest cover in the country is decreasing;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor;

(d) the number of schemes launched and being implemented by Government for development of forests in the country, particularly in the NER?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABULAL MARANDI): (a) The State-wise forest area and forest cover in the country, as per State of Forest Report, 1997 is given in the Statement. *(See* below)

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. The main reasons for reduction of forest cover in the country are increasing demand of forest produce for increasing human and cattle population, shifting cultivation, fire, grazing, illicit cutting, encroachment and lack of required investments in the forestry sector.

(d) Seven centrally sponsored schemes are being implemented by the Government for development of forests in the country out of which six schemes are also being implemented in the North-East Region. In addition, 18 externally aided forestry projects are being implemented in the country for the development of forests.